



NEWS RELEASE

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Contact: David Madden, (415) 355-8800

Ninth Circuit Judge Mary M. Schroeder to Assume Senior Status

SAN FRANCISCO – Judge Mary M. Schroeder of Phoenix announced today her intention to step down as an active judge of the United States Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit. Judge Schroeder plans to assume senior status on January 1, 2012, at which time she will have 32 years of service to the court.

Nominated by President Carter, Judge Schroeder, 70, was appointed to the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals on September 26, 1979. She was the first and only woman to serve as chief judge of the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals, a position she held from 2000 to 2007.

Noting that her change in status will create a vacancy on the Ninth Circuit bench, Judge Schroeder said she was hopeful that her empty seat and other vacancies in federal courts across the country will be filled promptly. There are some 94 vacancies currently on federal trial and appellate courts nationwide, including three on the U.S. District Court for the District of Arizona.

"There are too many vacant chairs on the bench in Arizona and in the country as a whole," Judge Schroeder said. "I hope the President and the Senate will work together in the coming months to fill them. This is an historic opportunity."

Taking senior status is an alternative to retirement, allowing federal judges to continue to serve the court while cutting back their caseloads over time. Many senior judges carry substantial caseloads for a number of years.

Judge Schroeder has notified President Obama of her intention to take senior status, and informed judicial colleagues and court staff.

"I want to thank all of my colleagues on the Court of Appeals and on the district and bankruptcy courts for their friendship and support," she said.

While she intends to maintain close to a full judicial caseload, Judge Schroeder said she hopes to devote more time to issues relating to human rights, including women's rights.

Judge Schroeder is a graduate of Swarthmore College, receiving a B.A. degree in 1962, and the University of Chicago Law School, receiving a J.D. degree in 1965. She began her legal career in Washington, D.C., as a trial attorney in the Department of Justice, 1965-1969. After moving west, she went on to become the first woman partner in a major Arizona law firm, and the first woman to serve on the Arizona Court of Appeals, 1975-1979.

Noting the historic contributions of Arizona women judges, including her mentor, the late Arizona Supreme Court Justice Lorna Lockwood, the first woman to serve as the chief justice of any state, and the Hon. Sandra Day O'Connor, the first woman to serve on the U.S. Supreme Court, Judge Schroeder said she looked forward to the day a woman serves as the nation's chief justice.

"That will come, if not in my lifetime, then in that of my daughters," said Judge Schroeder.

Judge Schroeder is a founding member and a past president of the National Association of Women Judges, the immediate past president of the Arizona Women's Forum, and a member of the International Association of Women Judges.

Federal law allows an Article III judge with the requisite tenure on the bench to retire as early as age 65 at their full current salary. Many judges choose, instead, to take senior status and continue to serve the judiciary at essentially no cost. The "Rule of 80" is the commonly used shorthand for the age and service requirement for a judge to assume senior status. Eligible judges are at least age 65 with 15 years experience, or at least 70 with 10 years experience.

The Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals, the nation's largest and busiest appellate court, hears appeals of cases decided by federal trial courts and certain executive branch administrative agencies in nine western states and two Pacific Island jurisdictions.

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